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Written statement* submitted by the Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[23 August 2018]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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Right to Peace: calling for Ministries of Peace all around the Word

Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23) welcomes the OHCHR Summary report on the Intersessional workshop on the right to peace (A/HRC/39/31).

The Intersessional workshop on the right to peace represented a valuable opportunity to discuss the implementation of the right to peace and make progress in the achievement of lasting and sustainable peace.

However, we regret that there was a low participation by Member States, civil society organizations and other stakeholders and thus that the significance and the potential of such an important event was partly missed.

Indeed, many interesting and constructive ideas emerged during the discussion, in particular regarding means to build peace within and between societies, sustainable measures to implement the Declaration on the Right to Peace, and the universal task of educating for peace. It is hence a pity that few stakeholders were present to listen to the speakers, reflect on their words and use their suggestions as starting points for fruitful national and international debates, including within the HRC framework, on how to achieve peace and to implement the right to peace.

Since its inception, APG23 has been committed to promoting the respect for human rights and right to peace through the promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence. APG23 participated in the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group on right to peace and actively contributed in the process for the recognition of the human right to peace that culminated with the adoption by the General Assembly of the Declaration on the Right to Peace in December 2016 (A/RES/71/189). We continue now to be seized of the implementation of such a fundamental right.

As pointed out during the Intersessional workshop by Ms. Kate Gilmore, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, the 2016 Declaration on the Right to Peace underscored a longed-for universal aspiration and goal: the achievement of lasting and sustainable peace.

Echoing her words, this is the right moment to deal with the issue of peace and the implementation of the right to peace. Since peace and human rights are inextricably intertwined and mutually reinforcing, the fulfilment of human rights is the best path towards conflict prevention and peace. It is not by chance that the theme of this year International Day of Peace is "The Right to Peace - The Universal Declaration of Human Rights at 70". The Human Rights Council can and should play a leading role in the process towards peace, especially in the year of the UDHR's 70th Anniversary.

It is necessary to ensure the right of everyone to enjoy peace and make peace a reality.

Peace is not only the absence of armed conflict nor solely a matter of inter-state relations, it is a comprehensive concept that entails the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the realization of integral development, the promotion of equality, non-discrimination, tolerance and dialogue, and the guarantee of justice, rule of law and accountability. This has been made crystal clear by art. 2 of the 2016 Declaration on the Right to Peace, which calls on States to "respect, implement and promote equality and non-discrimination, justice and the rule of law, and guarantee freedom from fear and want as a means to build peace *within* and *between* societies" (emphasis added).

On this issue, States should start to back words with deeds because we cannot afford to waste more time.

Therefore, we urge all Member States, which bear the primary responsibility for the international order, to make an even greater effort to ensure peace in the world. It is on the basis of art. 3 of the Declaration on the Right to Peace, which calls for "appropriate sustainable measures" for its implementation that APG23 encourages all States that do not have yet such an institution to establish a sustainable national infrastructure for peace, namely a Ministry of Peace.

This infrastructure would realize the right to peace and a peaceful social and international order where all human rights can be fully realized, as claimed by art. 28 of the UDHR.

The Ministry of peace should be a flexible structure that responds to the needs of the country concerned, devises and coordinates efforts for pursuing peace, from the local to the international levels. Given the complexity and the multidimensional nature of peace, such a Ministry should tackle a wide range of issues: Human Rights, Alternative Dispute Resolution and Reconciliation, Violence and Conflict Prevention, Peace Culture and Education, and Promotion of Peace Policies.

As stressed during the Intersessional Workshop, injustice, inequalities and disregard for human rights are enemies of peace, thus an effective Ministry of Peace should promote and coordinate policies and actions that ensure that everybody is treated fairly and enjoys his/her human rights.

Almost all speakers underlined the centrality of culture and education in preventing violence and in sustaining peace. For example, during the meeting, it was clearly reminded that "the right to peace and the culture of peace are two sides of the same coin" and that "education is the most powerful tool for transforming the world and achieving peace".

On this topic, the Ministry of Peace will be called to build a holistic vision of peace, eradicate exclusion and inequalities in education and invest both financial and human resources in peace culture and education.

The Ministry of Peace could also work on alternative disputes resolution and conflict prevention, for instance, by promoting disarmament and thus diminishing armed conflicts, realising rule of law and protecting people from physical harm as well as, inter alia, inequalities, environmental damages and food insecurity.

APG23 would also like to make the following further recommendations:

1. We appeal to the States to attach greater importance to the theme of peace and to create as soon as possible the optimal conditions for a greater development of human rights and the implementation of the right to peace in their countries;
2. We suggest creating the mandate of a Special Rapporteur or Independent Expert on the right to peace or giving the mandate to OHCHR to mainstream the right to peace, as it already happened with the right to development;
3. We call on States to cooperate more closely with UNESCO and the University for Peace on concrete programmes for the implementation of the Declaration on the Right to Peace under the coordination and assistance of the OHCHR;
4. We invite the Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) to update as soon as possible the OHCHR webpage and include peace and right to peace under the voice "all human rights issues" as well as to use its territorial offices to work at regional level for implementing the right to peace;
5. We invite States to reduce military spending and invest part of it in plans and projects which would contribute to the fulfilment of art.2 of the Declaration on the Right to Peace as well as to consider carrying out conversion of military industry.

In occasion of the 2018 International Day of Peace (21 September 2018) and given the theme chosen for this year celebration, APG23 and the United Nations-mandated University for Peace have decided to convene a parallel event for launching the proposal for establishing a Ministry of Peace in all countries. Indeed, we cannot think of a more suitable day for holding this parallel event nor of a better way to celebrate the International Day of Peace than gathering all together (Member States, intergovernmental organizations, civil society organizations and academia) to discuss concrete measures for achieving peace. We invite all Member States, civil society organizations, academia, intergovernmental bodies and other stakeholders to attend our event in room XXV from 13 to 14.30 hours.

During the meeting it will be distributed our paper "Calling for Ministries of Peace all around the World"[1] that provides inputs and suggestions so that each State can consider the proposal, choose the ingredients that better fit its context, tailor them to its own needs and develop its own Ministry of Peace.

[1] This document will be available for download at the following links:
http://www.apg23.org/downloads/files/ONU/calling_for_ministries_of_peace.pdf

Peace is an on-going process: even once it seems to be achieved, we cannot take for granted that it will last forever. We need continuous efforts to maintain it.

Only by building peace day after day, a peace strictly linked to development and the respect for human rights, we can generate peaceful, just and inclusive societies and the world envisaged by art.28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

As reaffirmed in the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, the joint commitment of all States, civil society organizations and citizens is necessary to reach our goal. It is time to take our commitments seriously and to stand all together to make peace a reality. As said by the UN Secretary General António Guterres "Let us stand up for human rights for all in the name of peace for all."[2]

[2] António Guterres, *The Secretary General – Message for 100-Day Countdown to the International Day of Peace*, 13 June 2018, retrieved from: https://minujusth.unmissions.org/en/secretary-general-%E2%80%93-message-100-day-countdown-international-day-peace